

# CAMBODIA

## PHNOM PENH, COMMUNIST ALLIES DEFEND MAYAGUEZ SHIP SEIZURE

Cambodia's newly established communist regime denounced the U.S. military operation to recover the freighter Mayaguez in a 16 May press communique from the RGNU information ministry which charged that the U.S. action on the previous day was an "act of aggression" and that air attacks on Cambodian facilities had occurred hours after Cambodia had released the Mayaguez crew. The communique, like a communique from the same ministry released on the 15th while the U.S. operation was under way, justified the seizure of the Mayaguez as a defense of Cambodian sovereignty against the intruding "spy ship" and insisted that the United States had provoked the incident. Phnom Penh's response at this level--through communiqués signed by RGNU spokesman and Minister of Information and Propaganda Hu Nim--is consistent with the precedent set by its only other foreign policy pronouncement since the RGNU seized control of the country in mid-April. Hu Nim likewise signed a statement on 10 May protesting "dishonest propaganda" allegedly spread by the United States about repressive Cambodian internal policies and maltreatment of foreigners.

Outside of Cambodia, head of state Prince Sihanouk sent a message from Peking on 16 May to Algerian President Boumediene appealing for Third World support, and on 18 May he expressed "full support" for Cambodia's action in a cable to RGNU Deputy Prime Minister Khieu Samphan. North and South Vietnam and North Korea each backed Cambodia's position with authoritative statements at foreign ministry or ministry spokesman level, while China's first leadership comment came in a speech by Vice Premier Li Hsien-nien. Soviet media reaction thus far has been restricted largely to low-level reportage on the incident.

CAMBODIA      The 15 May Phnom Penh communique, which announced the RGNU decision to release the Mayaguez just as the U.S. recovery operation was getting underway, was replete with avowals of Cambodia's wish to "provoke no one or to make trouble." The communique alleged that the ship had intruded into Cambodian territorial waters on a spy mission as part of what it described in detail as a continuing campaign to conduct sabotage, espionage, and blockade against Cambodia, and it affirmed Cambodia's right to protect national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The communique contained one critical reference to the Ford Administration

by name--the first such mention by the Communists since their 17 April takeover of Phnom Penh. It referred to U.S. planes sinking "two" Cambodian patrol boats on 14 May, saying that Phnom Penh still had "no precise idea" of the damage or the number of killed--a possible indication of communications difficulties between Phnom Penh and the coast.

The briefer 16 May pronouncement labeled the landing of U.S. Marines on Tang Island and the bombings of the Sihanoukville area the previous day as "savage, ferocious, insane aggressive acts," claiming that they had begun three and one-half hours after Phnom Penh had "returned" the crew. It said Washington's actions were "proof" that the United States had provoked the incident as a pretext to intensify its "blockade" and "sabotage" against Cambodia.

The Mayaguez incident also drew passing mention in a 19 May Information and Propaganda Ministry statement devoted mainly to denouncing as "tricks of U.S. imperialism and its hirelings" recent Western press reports of a Cambodian ultimatum to Thailand over their common border. Noting the U.S. use of bases in Thailand during the fray, this statement predicted that "despite these historical facts" Cambodia and Thailand "can live peacefully as neighboring countries."

Sihanouk's 16 May cable to Algerian President Boumediene, carried by NCNA on the 17th, appealed for Third World condemnation of the "cowardly and monstrous act of aggression" of the United States. Declaring that the United States would "always remain a paper tiger," Sihanouk charged that the United States was attempting to revenge its "ignominious and undeniable defeat" in Cambodia and Vietnam. His 18 May cable to Khieu Samphan, reported by NCNA on the 19th, expressed full support for RGNU measures and the CPNLF's effectiveness in handling the incident, and added that "for all its ridiculous bragging, the Ford-Kissinger clique has not emerged any nobler from this frantic adventure."

FOREIGN SUPPORT      PRC Vice Premier Li Hsien-nien made Peking's initial response to the incident, in brief remarks delivered at a 15 May reception given by the DRV envoy in Peking to celebrate the communist takeover of Saigon. Li accused the Mayaguez of intruding into Cambodia's territorial waters, backed Cambodia's "legitimate measures" against the ship, and denounced as "an outright act of piracy" the U.S. bombing of Cambodian ships and territory. Peking's formal response to the

Cambodian protests came in a 17 May PEOPLE'S DAILY Commentator article, which denounced the "acts of piracy pure and simple" by the United States and offered a perfunctory, generalized pledge of Chinese support. Chinese comment has avoided all mention of the Ford Administration and did not directly condemn the United States in the name of the Chinese Government. By contrast, Peking's response to the January 1968 Pueblo incident off North Korea had come at the formal level of a PRC Government statement on 28 January which had offered the "firm support" of the Chinese Government and people against "U.S. imperialism's flagrant provocation."

A 15 May DRV Foreign Ministry statement denounced the alleged violation of Cambodian territorial waters by the "spyship" Mayaguez and the dispatch of U.S. Marines to Thailand as "an extremely serious act of war." Attacking the Ford Administration by name, the statement concluded that the United States was persisting in its "policy of intervention and aggression" against Cambodia and demanded that the United States cease its "acts of war" and withdraw its Marines from Thailand. It promised to "resolutely support" Cambodia's right to defend its "territory, airspace, and territorial waters." A 16 May PRG Foreign Ministry statement closely paralleled the DRV statement. Most comment did not criticize Thai involvement in the episode, but a 17 May Hanoi radio station commentary broadcast in English, noted that it was "regrettable that the Thai authorities had allowed the United States to freely encroach upon their sovereignty, thus causing a bad effect on their relationship with neighboring countries." However, the commentary singled out only the "Ford Administration" as the party to be held "fully responsible for all the consequences arising therefrom."

A 18 May DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman statement, offering to "fully support" the RGNU's stand, denounced the U.S. military response as evidence that the United States was "still persistently clinging to the policy of aggression and interference" in Indochina and Asia. An 18 May NODONG SINMUN commentary pointed out that the "frantic use of force" by the United States demonstrated its "aggressive ambition to hang on in Asia at all costs, even while being hit hard and kicked out of Asia." The commentary noted the Thai Government protest over the "blatant infringement" of Thai sovereignty by the United States and predicted that the United States would "surely be kicked out" of Asia, including Korea.